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4 April 1961

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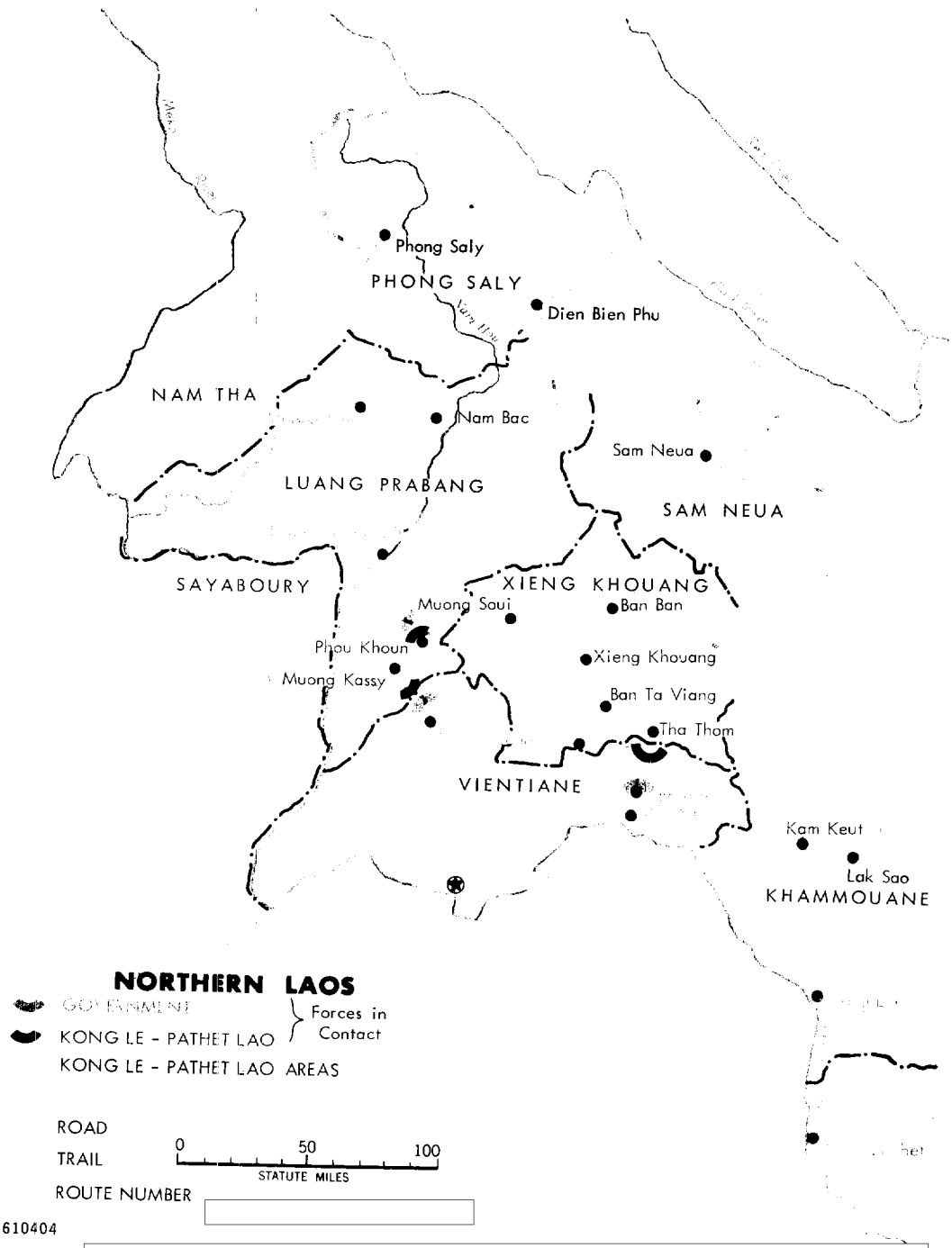

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DAILY BRIEF

Laos: Vientiane has adopted an official position of "no comment" pending study of the Soviet reply to the British proposal; privately, however, General Phoumi and Premier Boun Oum are taking a gloomy line over prospects, stressing the weak military situation. A country team appraisal of the military situation in Laos underscores the defensive psychology of the Laotian Army which is enabling the aggressive enemy forces to fight at a tempo of their own choosing, and to build up strength for attack on any point. According to this appraisal, General Phoumi appears increasingly to feel that the Laotian Army alone will be unable to control the military situation and is increasingly anxious for outside help.

Major elements of the government force which withdrew from Tha Thom have reached Borikhane, and some control over them has been established. Other government units in the area have been ordered farther north to make contact with the enemy in an effort to stabilize the situation. [redacted] (b)(1) (b)(3)

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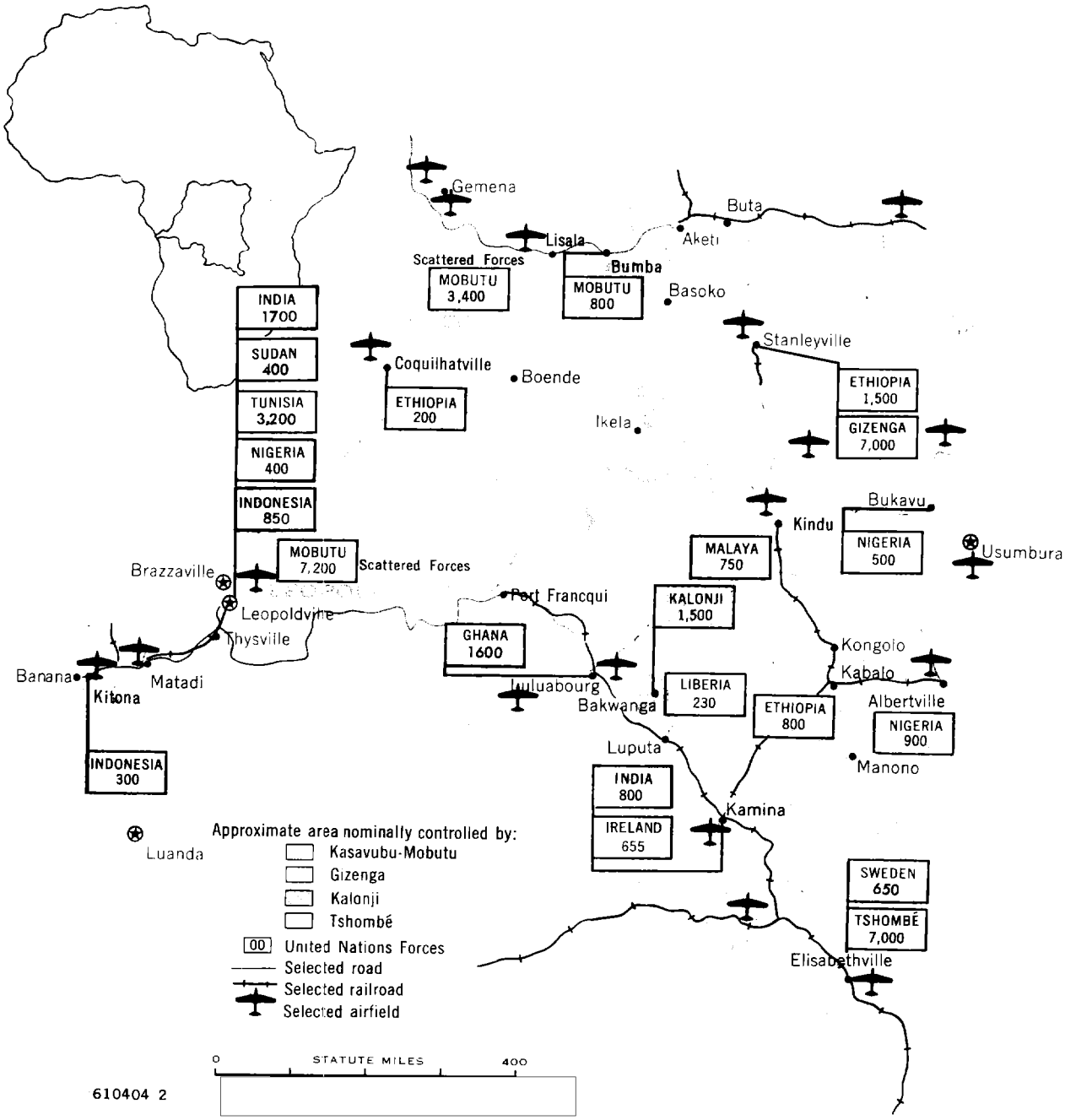

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Congo: Tshombé's position in Manono apparently is not yet secure, although the reinforcements sent there on 1 April will make a Baluba counterattack difficult. Baluba snipers reportedly are infiltrating the Katanga army lines and are inflicting casualties on Tshombé's white mercenaries. The mercenaries, who seem to be the only reliable and aggressive elements of Tshombé's forces, apparently are becoming increasingly nervous. Further operations by Tshombé will also be hampered by the 1,700-man Indian UN contingent which is being flown to nearby Kamina. [redacted] (b)(3)

[redacted] (Map) (b)(3)

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[redacted]

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Laos

The apparently growing number of North Vietnamese involved on the enemy side is particularly discouraging to General Phoumi, according to American officials in Vientiane. American military personnel formerly stationed at Tha Thom describe the actions taken by the enemy forces during the six weeks preceding the town's capture on 31 March as "professional" and not of a type that could be executed by the average Pathet Lao. Three Soviet IL-14s on apparent air-drop missions in the Tha Thom area were seen by reliable observers on 31 March, and additional drops in the same general vicinity reportedly occurred on 30 March. So sudden and furious was the enemy action at Tha Thom that it appears that all the government's crew-served weapons, including two 105-mm. howitzers, were captured intact.

[redacted] (b)(1)

Senior American officials in Vientiane believe that the leadership of both the Laotian Army and government is "terribly uncertain" and vulnerable to factors and forces over which the leaders feel they have little control. One such factor is the enemy's military potential, which General Phoumi feels is greater than his own at this time. A second crucial factor is US political, economic, and military support; if this appears to weaken or waver, a further loss of confidence can be expected, and with rapidity.

In his recent discussions with Admiral Felt, Phoumi revealed that he has a standing agreement with South Vietnam for a Vietnamese division to enter southern Laos as an intervention force in case he asks for assistance. He stated that he has not yet called for entry of this division since the situation does not warrant intervention. (b)(1) (b)(3)

[redacted]

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Soviet propaganda has underscored Moscow's contention that the way is now open for a peaceful solution in Laos. President Kennedy's remarks on the 1 April Soviet reply to the British proposals on Laos have been widely circulated. Moscow radio carried the text of the President's statement and reported that it is carried in full in the 3 April issue of Pravda. Soviet broadcasts have also reported an article in the Peiping People's Daily of 1 April which called for an enlarged Geneva conference as the "only way" to solve the Laotian problem. Moscow, in broadcasting the remarks made by Chen Yi in Djakarta, omitted any reference to his threat to send Chinese troops to Laos. The Soviet broadcast quoted Chen Yi as saying that Peiping "will not remain indifferent in the event SEATO launches direct military intervention in Laos."

Terming the Soviet reply to the British note "practical and correct," Hanoi's official newspaper Nhan Dan on 3 April called for prompt convocation of an international conference. The conference also was endorsed by Pathet Lao leader Prince Souphannouvong and by the Xieng Khouang "government." Souphannouvong, in a 1 April statement, and Souvanna Phouma's Xieng Khouang "representative" Quinim Pholsena, in a statement of 2 April, both demanded withdrawal of "US, Thai, South Vietnamese, and Kuomintang military personnel." The emphasis on this withdrawal suggests it is a point which may be used to prolong any cease-fire negotiations such as the USSR said should be held between the "interested parties of Laos."

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Situation in the Congo

Tshombé's white mercenaries from South Africa reportedly are annoyed by the Belgians in command of the African units at Manono. The Belgian officers apparently are taking credit for the capture of the town, although their African troops reportedly refused to fight and the brunt of the fighting was borne by the white legionnaires.

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In Belgium, Paul-Henri Spaak, who apparently expects to be named the next foreign minister as a result of the 26 March elections, reportedly believes that Brussels has been helping Katanga too extensively and that more effort should be expended in support of the Leopoldville regime. The Belgian caretaker government reportedly agreed on 24 March to make available to Leopoldville $4,000,000, but the actual turnover of the funds is likely to be delayed.

In New Delhi yesterday, Nehru took note of the "campaign against Mr. Rajeshwar Dayal" and made public his opposition to the replacement of Dayal now "or in the near future." He said removal of Dayal "would also have some effect on the maintaining of our forces" in the Congo. Dayal, the Indian diplomat who has served as Hammarskjold's personal representative in

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the Congo, is now in New York for consultations and is not expected to return to the Congo for several weeks. Dayal alienated many Congolese officials, and there has been apprehension in Leopoldville that his return may generate new tensions and possibly touch off new anti-UN disorders. [redacted] (b)(3)

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France May Use Cuban Issue in UN to Press US

France has continually opposed what it considers the United States' indiscriminate efforts to win the political support of the Afro-Asian states in the UN. Paris is motivated partly by fear of establishing precedents which will pave the way for increased UN activity in Africa to the detriment of French interests, particularly in Algeria. Principally, however, De Gaulle views the UN as a heterogeneous mixture numerically dominated by new states, fundamentally incapable of action but increasingly tending to assume the responsibility of the large powers for the maintenance of peace.

The US vote in the Security Council on 15 March in favor of the Liberian resolution calling for UN consideration of the Angolan question probably was the immediate occasion for the French suggestion to the Portuguese. Various French political commentators have recently berated the US for failure to "stand with its allies." The influential and usually pro-American Raymond Aron said in an article on 22 March in Le Figaro that the US "double standard" will backfire when "the Marxists train their guns on US 'imperialism' in Latin America." Paris can be expected to continue to urge the other colonial powers to utilize the Cuban resolution or any similar resolutions, particularly those critical of US policy in Latin America, as an opportunity to make this point forcefully.

Lisbon's sharply hostile reaction to the recent US vote suggests that it will give serious consideration to the French tactic. Portuguese officials believe the US position has encouraged Afro-Asian attacks on the colonial powers, and Lisbon has been seeking ways to induce the US to change its African policies. The vitriolic anti-American press campaign and demonstrations in Portugal have linked the US stand with that of the Soviet Union and have singled out Ambassador Stevenson as the chief villain. A leading editorial on 29 March in the government-controlled newspaper Diario de Noticias stressed that the US bases in the Azores had been granted with the understanding that Portuguese sovereignty would be respected in all of the Portuguese colonies, that Portugal had

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only joined the UN on the insistence of the US and Britain, and that the loyalty and solidarity Lisbon had given the NATO alliance had been forgotten.

The Cuban request for UN General Assembly consideration of "the clear threat to international peace and security" posed by "the various plans of aggression and acts of intervention" of the United States against the Cuban Government was originally submitted last October. Cuba has subsequently further detailed its charges against the US in several formal complaints circulated in the UN. (b)(1) [redacted] Indonesia and Guinea plan to submit a resolution in the General Assembly recommending that the US and Cuba make every effort to settle their differences by peaceful means. . . in bilateral discussions," (b)(1) [redacted] the Cuban Government is actively pushing such a resolution.

For some weeks, Cuba's public position has been that it is willing and anxious to engage in bilateral discussions with the US, provided such discussions are on a "basis of equality and with an open agenda," but that the present US attitude prevents such discussions. In its note of 8 March rejecting the Argentine offer of good offices toward easing US-Cuban "differences," Havana reiterated these views but added, "The conduct of the US Government and the statements of its officials" would make any effort toward bilateral discussions at this time "useless." [redacted] (b)(3)

[redacted] (b)(1)

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